DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 717 TM 017 672

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TITLE Maieutic Pedagogy & Evaluation: The Hazards in Deconstructing Mimetic Traditions.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Assessment; *Educational Practices; Evaluation Methods; *Formative Evaluation; Grade 8; *Grading; Informal Assessment; Junior High Schools; Models; Nontraditional Education; Peer Evaluation; *Secondary School Teachers; *Student Evaluation; Summative Evaluation; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Maieutic Pedagogy; *Mimetic Traditions

ABSTRACT

An instructor in a junior high school English program which involved teaching approximately 160 eighth graders on a daily basis found it almost impossible to assess students fairly by taking individual differences into account when grading. Her solution was to invite students to participate in the construction, performance, and evaluation of their own learning. Eventually the students were trained to both formatively and summatively evaluate the writing of their peers through the use of focused interactive dialogue, and it was found that this experience with student evaluation of peers' compositions established the validity and usefulness of peer ratings and grading; it also resulted in a number of reflections about the nature of grading and student assessment. Collaborative research by three male and three female teachers studied student perspectives on evaluation measures, beginning by examining the teachers' grading and evaluation practices. Five were currently teaching secondary school, and 4 taught 130 to 158 students each day. All six teachers indicated that they gave grades only because the educational system required it. Two teachers in alternative schools did not give grades as such, but offered summary judgments of student progress through passing or failing. One teacher offered formative evaluation but did not grade her students; the students graded themselves through discussion with the teacher. Reflections on these teachers' approaches are presented first in the context of the traditional mimetic teaching model in which knowable truths are taught and their acquisition is monitored and measured by evaluation, and then with respect to a "maieutic" model of exploring, integrating, and transcending (creating personal meaning). The collaborative research of this group of teachers illustrates many of the problems associated with student evaluation in the mimetic tradition. A 42-item list of references and the original evaluation and grading survey are included. (SLD)

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Maieutic* Pedagogy & Evaluation: The Hazards in Deconstructing Mimetic* Traditions

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 1991 (Revised July 1991)

* A discussion of my use of "maieutic" and "mimetic" begins on page 16.

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> In 1893 a great world's fair amassed itself in the city of Chicago. The Columbian Exposition celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus's landing and stood as the penultimate symbol of "American energy and American culture combined to extol the apogee of human progress and evolution" (Edson 1988: 9). Promoters intentionally designed the fair to be educative. In one exhibit, interested fairgoers were measured by physical anthropologists under the direction of Franz Boas and Joseph Jastrow. Physiologies were evaluated after participants' measurements were compared with statues fashioned after the epitome of American youth, a male from Harvard and a female from Radcliff (Edson 1988). A century later evaluation in education continues to mirror the underlying assumptions and values inherent in this scenario.

Introduction:

This inquiry began in 1988 when I was teaching language arts at a traditional rural junior high school. After a year of sabbatical leave, I had returned to my teaching position invigorated and ready to incorporate emphases of critical thinking and composition into English coursework I had been assigned. My adolescent students were vitality itself, albeit walled in by the facade of obedience contemporary schooling demands of its clients. The situation was ripe for revitalization. We were a stew pot of potentiality, and we cooked together--our various flavours and textures complementing each other in one moment and in the next accentuating the diverse elements we represented.

After I modeled a unit on the student-selected topic of war, student interest groups formed around other aspects of violence in human interactions. Students chose to inquire into the abuse of women and children, drug and alcohol related violence, gang and terrorist activities, satanism, and racism. Cohorts researched, taught, and evaluated mini-units that incorporated the investigation on these subjects into a writing process curricula. In the course of their tenure as teachers, students not only assessed their peers progess in meeting collectively defined goals, they evaluated the content and process of the course itself. From our collaboration and subsequent reflections and evaluations of that process, I learned more about

teaching and learning than I had in any education courses (Long 1989). The students I work with continue to be my greatest teachers. Herein, however, I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of this particular group of eighth graders. Their lessons continue to encourage and teach me.

The Catalytic First Study: Students as Evaluators

As an instructor in a junior high English program in which I was expected to teach 160 students in a day, it seemed almost impossible to assess student progress equitably by taking individual differances into account when grading. Like most teachers, I made judgments and allowed my personal knowledge of each student to influence summative evaluation. I did what teachers have always done--I judged my students as fairly as I thought humanly possible and went about my business. I did not question the practice of grading itself, its origins, or its purpose. By the time my students and I had completed the school year, however, I had begun to ask those quesions.

I assumed my established grading practices were as fair as they could be. My problem, as I described it then, was how to make evaluation meaningful to my students. My solution was to invite students to participate in the construction, performance, and evaluation of their own learning. I assumed that if students had some choice in what they learned and understood how and why they were being evaluated, the classroom experience would be of some educative value to them. Upon reflection, I realize that I had a less obvious agenda as well. I simply had too many students to deal with efficiently and was seeking a means of providing them with the best teaching/learning/assessment situation possible.

It seemed logical that if students and I collaborated by sharing traditionally defined teacher duties, I would have more time to prepare appropriate curriculum and give them substantive observations on their individual growth. I began temperately by expanding on the peer editing model of formative feedback I had learned while working on my masters degree in English. It worked beautifully. Heady with apparent success, I expanded student involvement even further. Using state department of education trait descriptors for writing assessment, I trained students to both formatively and summatively evaluate peer writing through the use of focused interactive dialogue. As the school year drew to a close, I also invited students to evaluate components of the course itself and my teaching. Much has been written about the merits of peer

editing, but the two remaining uses of evaluation deserve some clarification.

Peer Summative Evaluation:

Each year in our state, the department of education assesses student writing at the eighth grade level. After acquiring student writing samples, a panel of experienced English teachers scores each composition according to six traits: ideas/content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence structure, and conventions. Each catergory is described with some precision and evaluators are advised of how to assess the level of competence students achieve in each category based on a scale of 1-5. This process was not unlike that which students and I had been using for several months in our peer evaluation model.

After the state department of education had evaluated student papers and returned them to our school, my students and I discussed how their final scores had been derived. During the course of our discussion we decided to place ourselves in the assessor role and reevaluate the papers. I selected a range of papers from each of my English classes, removed any identifying marks or references so authors would remain anonymous, and created a classroom sets papers for holistic scoring by another class. Students evaluated these disguised papers using the same traits and scoring instructions provided state evaluators. When their scores were averaged, we found that without exception these novice reader/evaluators had scored the same papers professionals had within a half point variance of the experts' orginal scores.

What had begun as an experiment became a final bit of convincing evidence that students were capable of not only providing formative feedback for peers during the writing process, but that hey were also capable of summatively evaluating finished work when properly trained. Not only was I convinced, students were convinced that they were able to recognize and describe good writing. Their self-assuredness increased with this experience and they became more willing and capable teacher/assessors for one another and more confident in their abilities to assess their own work.

Student Assessment of Course Components:

At the end of the school year, students were also invited to evaluate the composition course itself. It is important to note that these evaluations were conducted during my absence, and students were assured anonymity. Student observations were thoughtful and showed a maturity and depth of understanding that surprised me. Even when two-thirds of the students declared journal writing to be their least favorite aspect of the course, they acknowledged their value. "It takes a lot of writing, but it keeps you thinking about the subject you're on." Almost a third of the students stated in some manner that they liked keeping journals, and several of those said they would continue the process on their own. Small group work--which was used for discussion , editing, preparing and teaching mini-units--was a favorite aspect of the course. A few students confessed to talking too much and being annoyed by "goof-offs," but the vast majority found the experience valuable. " I liked learning how and what others thought. That helped me get ideas." "If you don't get the assignment others in the group will." "You always get help when you need it." One of the most interesting comments, and one that was echoed by several other students--as well as educational research--was, "I think kids can explain things better and in different ways so we understand."

Editing each other's papers met with mixed feelings. Many expressed distress at having to evaluate peer papers, explaining at the same time that they really liked to have feedback on their own. Several respondents revealed evidence of their own educational growth in their responses. One admitted that at first she was reluctant to criticize others' papers at all, but that by the end of first semester, she felt like she was "letting others down" if she didn't comment honestly.

Teaching mini-units was another favorite acitivity. Many students corroberated educational research when they claimed that they learned while they taught, and that having to teach something caused them to learn content more efficiently. Other comments provided insight into the asymmetrical teacher/student power relationship: "Kids are usually shut out but this is a chance to show who we are." "It was fun (to teach) because I don't like to be in the backseat all the time." "(Teaching was) a great way to find out what it's like to be at the head of the class looking down on students."

Others took a more compassionate perspective: "It (teaching to peers) gave me an idea of what you feel like when we don't listen to you." "I hated the grading part. It was hard for me to decide what grade to give someone." "I learned teamwork." For one student, the role reversal was enlightening, "I always thought teachers gave me

bad grades because they didn't like me. But now other students have told me I have the same problems in my papers that teachers said I did." It was also obvious that students had come to see themselves as capable creators of knowledge. They often referred to each other as teachers. "Having short units on different subjects with different teachers was interesting."

Transition:

I left my classroom at the end of that year, creating a new path for myself by entering a doctoral program in curriculum and instruction, but the effects of this practical classroom research haunted me. Why do teachers give grades? How do we explain the process to ourselves and to our students? How do students perceive different forms of evaluation? Would a formal study of teacher/student collaboration verify my experiences? What could we learn from such a study that would help imrove the teaching/learning environment in classrooms? When I found myself in a situation in which to pursue those questions, I took up the thread again and implemented a more formal inquiry into teacher grading and evaluation practices. The following is a summary to date of research in process. Six teachers and I are just beginning to ask the first few questions: Why do teachers give grades, and how do they explain the process to themselves and their students?

The Second Study:

While the seeds for this study were sown several years ago in the struggle to understand my own teaching and evaluation practices, in this current work I concentrate most heavily upon the experiences of other teachers. Initially I was interested in the self-described grading and evaluation practices of secondary school teachers. I also included a tenative inquiry into how teachers allowed for differences among students. As the research progressed, I realised that each individual teacher had acquired her or his evaluation policies and practices, much as I had, from overlapping and interacting informal experiences. Traditionally, very little time is given in teacher preparation programs to evaluation of student growth and learning (Hills 1991, Stiggins 1988 & 1991).

My underlying assumption is that by encouraging participant teachers to discuss their grading and evaluation practices and

sharing my classroom experiences, teachers in this study might invite student voice as a constructively evaluative force in the classroom. By generating student feedback as data for analysis on the effectiveness of their own teaching practices and course content, I hope participants will experience an epiphany similar to my own. I assume that several subjects currently involved in this study will have the time, energy, and commitment to take the next step and become collaborative researchers in a project to investigate how students experience their evaluation and assessment practices.

Methodology:

So far the research process has worked on several levels with varying degrees of imposition. From the original pool of fifteen survey respondents, eight have continued through the second stage, an interview based on individual responses to survey questions. From this group, a self-selected group of six have reached the current stage of this project--the production of collaboratively designed methods of surveying students' perspectives on evaluation measures within the classrooms of teacher/researchers. But that is work in process; this portion of the study focuses on the early stages--how teachers explained their individual grading and evaluation practices.

Andrew Gitlin (1990) refers to the type of research I find most valuable as "educative" research because it views traditionally excluded groups--such as teachers and students--as having the authority to produce knowledge. It acknowledges the social construction of knowledge and experience as having truth value. Appropriate procedures for engaging in studies of this nature are indicated by context. They evolve and change "given the needs and priorities of a particular population" (447).

The central aim of this portion of the research project is to develop dialogue, to unearth the beliefs behind existing practices and to subject them to scrutiny. By engaging teachers in survey and interview processes focused on their individual grading and evaluation philosophies and practices, participants engaged in an internal dialogue. As they generated responses in written and oral modes, a dialogue opened with the researcher, adding another perspective and further engaging their thinking processes. "Your questions have started me on the process of reflection" (Carl). As the research proceeds, I envision expanded dialogues that will include those of teacher/researchers with their students and, eventually, a

collective dialogue among participants themselves. In this manner I hope to mitigate a research situation described by Joan Acker:

> The question becomes how to produce an analysis which goes beyond the experience of the researched while still granting them full subjectivity. How do we explain the lives of others without violating their reality. (1983:429)

As the voices and interpretations of the teacher/researchers continue to emerge and expand within the context of this study, my currently more controlling researcher voice will diminish so that my present soliloquy will become tempered by their chorus, thereby allowing the development of a collaborative dialogue. According to Gitlin (1990) dialogue differs from talk or conversation in several important ways:

1. A precondition for dialogue is that "all participants see the discourse as important and have a say in determining its course".
2. Dialogue does not set up adversarial roles. It enables participants to work together to understand the subject being discussed.
3. Dialogue requires that even if one person understands the situation more completely than the other, the person with understanding does not assume a judgmental or unaffected role. (448)

Dialogic agreement, a concept studied by Emily Schultz (1990), also suits my purposes at this point. "Dialogic agreement is the means by which change is incorporated into human understanding" (146). She cites a description by W. C. Smith (1988: 11) as illustrative of her interpretation:

> The question is not whether you agree with what I say, and certainly not with the imperfect way that I am saying it; rather, whether you see some of the things that I see and am trying to point to and am offering a vocabularty to talk about and whether you see other things of this ilk that I have not seen, and can point them out to me. And finally, of course, the question is whether those things that various ones of us have seen are indeed there. The purpose is that we may all live enriched. (146)

I do not presume to teach or study the six remaining collaborators, I seek to examine a situation common to us and to become a co-learner with them in this process. I am comfortable with these models of dialogue because they remind me of the formative feedback loop of recursive assessment that is an integral part of the whole language writing process I have employed in my teaching.

The formal research began with a survey (Appendix I) of secondary school teachers. It was followed, in some cases, by interviews based on teacher survey responses. During the interview process, I eventually asked subjects if they would be interested in learning how individual students perceived their grading and evaluation practices. For those who acquiesced, I suggested that we work collaboratively to devise an appropriate method of inquiry. At this point in time we are preparing those tools. Our experiences with this stage will manifest itself over the course of the 1991-92 school year. I became more comfortable with my emerging agenda by engaging in this participant self-selection process with teachers, inviting their participation at various levels of the research and allowing them to discontinue participation at any time.

Description of Participants:

[Although the bulk of data used in this project comes from survey and interview transcripts of six respondents who have agreed to continue the inquiry, some note will be given to other survey responses. When data from those sources are included, a brief description of the speaker will be included.]

The focus group, which provided the most substantial amount of data in this study, was evenly balanced with males and females. All six have children of their own, and five of the six are currently married . They ranged in age from 39 to 49 at the time the research began, and they reported between 15-25 years of teaching experience. All have taught either language arts or social studies in secondary schools with students in grades 9-12. All but one is currently teaching in a secondary school. Half of them indicated that one or both of their parents had taught. Most respondents were responsible for teaching 130-158 students in a day. The exception being two teachers who taught in an alternative school; they reported serving approximately 70 students each. One of the two has had previous experience with 150 or more students, while the other has only taught in situations where the student/teacher ratio was kept considerably smaller.

All particpants teach in the same west coast state, "one of the whitest states in the union " (Earl). Five of the them teach in the

state's second largest city, a university town of liberal reputation with a population of over 100,000. "We vote for losers consistently in state and national politics" (Earl). Two of the five teachers, Earl and Carl, work in a nationally recognized high school serving a white, upper middle class student population of approximately 1600.

Carol and Tim work in a school with a population of 130 "at-risk" students. Their school provides an accelerated high school diploma program for students who:

> ...are at-risk of dropping out, of stopping their education because of some factor in their lives. Either a learning disability or poor peer interaction or problems at home or with the law--drug abuse or sexual abuse. (Tim)

> Almost all are dysfunctional....(They are) at-risk academically. They have usually been failing at school in previous situations. That is common across all of them.... They didn't fit into the regular high school. They find community here....(The faculty) help them feel comfortable with themselves and help them. For maybe the first time in their lives they find people they can trust and talk to. (Carol)

Of the two remaining participants, Lisa works in a small rural town located about 20 miles south of the city. Residents there rely on lumber and other blue collar enterprises for employment. The student population at the town's only high school is under 800. The final respondent, Ella, teaches at the university housed in the larger city. Ella's views on evaluation and grading are starkly different than those of other repondents. Her responses provided a study in contrast akin to the dilemmas of schooling delineated by Ann and Harold Berlak (1981). I also found myself comparing my experiences as a teacher with those in the study.

Teachers Reflect on Their Grading and Evaluation Practices:

Until I allowed students to evaluate themselves and found reliability in their judgments, one of the teaching duties that seldom gave me pause to reflect was that of grading--summative evaluation at the end of a project or term. It was an unpleasant task, but I accepted it without question as part of my job. In my inquiry into

teacher grading and evaluation practices, I found that other teachers held similar thoughts.

> I would personally like to abandon "grading"...Grades do not necessarily validate learning, nor do they measure success, but it is the accepted measurement and I've been stuck with it my entire life. (Jan, a forty-four year old female language arts teacher who has returned to university seeking a doctorate in education.)

All six primary respondents indicated that they gave grades only because the educational system expected them to do so.

> I've always felt uncomfortable with grading. I think most teachers do. I am required to do it, and I do it because of societal pressure. (Lisa)

> I'm not saying letter grades are the answer, but I am a realist. Grades are a fact of life for kids in high school. (Carl)

> I give grades because it is the system--because the system asks me to. There's no other reason. (Earl)

The three remaining teachers indicated that they don't give grades, although there is summary judgment given on student progress. Tim and Carol decide that their students have either passed or not passed in a given course. They believe that by approaching summative evaluation in this way they themselves are not grading in the competitive mode more familiar in traditional educational settings.

> Formal evaluation in my current teaching position is first and foremost based on attendance....In addition, in my classes my students must satisfactorily complete all assignments.(Carol)

Ella, the remaining teacher, presents a different approach to grading. She never grades her students; they grade themselves. She offers them formative evaluation during the learning process, but she does not summatively evaluate. "The information available to teachers is necessarily partial and incomplete. Only the students know best

both process and product." Ella discusses evaluation with individual students, asking them to "define their own evaluation criteria" and "assign their own grades." Her rationale developed out of experiences in open education. As a child Ella attended what she described as a child-centered laboratory school housed at a small west coast college where her father taught. Later, her teaching took place in similar settings.

Ella's perspective on grading and evaluation was so far removed from those of other respondents in this ongoing study that I often juxtapose her views with the remaining voices. The contrast provides a stark representation. If we consider Ella at one end of the spectrum of grading and evaluation philosophies, other respondents would fall with little variation at the opposite end. After my recent classroom experiences, I would place my current philosophy closer to that of Ella, although the five remaining voices speak in words, phrases, experiences, and attitudes familiar to me.

Grading & Evaluation: Objectivity and Subjectivity

All respondents, with the exception of Ella, differentiated between two types of grading. Most often then spoke of formal and informal assessment measures or declared some of their practices and processes as objective and others as subjective. For Lisa the subjective portion included student effort, improvement and class participation. Objective evaluation was "something that can be measured" or "achievement of definable instructional goals". Invariably teachers labeled their mathematical computations in grading as objective, whether they were declaring the number of points awarded for an individual assignment or describing the weighted importance of tests to projects, daily work, or behavior.

In her work with at-risk students in an alternative school, Carol, a forty-four year old female whose early career included experience as a VISTA worker in Africa, does not assign letter grades. Instead, "evaluation (informal) is done on a very personal level with lots of feedback from me to the student." Carol highlights formative evaluation as the most important aspect of her assessment protocol. All respondents indicated that this type of student assessment was vital to their teaching.

> Letter grading is too narrow. Personal evaluation of individuals should also be used for a more complete picture. Personal evaluation means you need to know

> the kids. You need to know what they can do. What's important to them. Where they are emotionally as well as academically. (Tim)

> Letter grades should be supplemented with further, more detailed evaluation/grading forms (i.e. conferences, written comments, corrections, and suggestions for improvement). (Carl)

Only Ella, Carol, and Tim felt they had the time to provide quality formative feedback for their students because they have the time and environment in which "getting to know" their students on a more interpersonal level is possible. To the others, the number of students they see in a day and the limited time they have precludes a more personal involvement in assessment procedures.

> It doesn't allow me enough time for reflective consideration. It is in this sense a factory. If I had 100 kids, I could do a better job. (Carl)

> If grades didn't exist and I had fewer students, I would do things differently. I'd do written evaluations of each student, so they got my sense of where they were, what their potential was. It would be pretty soft, subjective. (Earl)

Lisa feels it is her duty to respond to students about their work. She feels "guilt" when she cannot read what they are doing on a daily basis and provide feedback. "The kids are funny. They really want to know that you have read their paper. It's real important to them."

Dissonance: Philosophies and Practical Application

At times throughout the research process, participants' practices were obviously at odds with their declared philosophies. The constraints of schooling schedules and management decisions outside of their control interfer with their desire to meet individual student needs. The contradictions emphasize the degree of dissonance and frustration classroom teachers face when trying to meet conflicting demands. Teacher ambivalence on the subject of grading has been revealed in other research (Barnes 1985, Agnew 1985), and yet studies of actual teacher grading practices is almost

nonexistent (Stiggins 1986, Briscoe 1991). The educational system demands grades. "It's the real world. colleges and universities demand grades, and most of the kids here are headed for college" (Carl). "The purpose of grades is to rank the population" (Earl).

> Most grading systems need to be more individualized and less rigid....In public school you have to individualize whenever possible and consider all factors. You have to hang onto the kids. They have a right to be here. (Carl)

However, when describing "A" work, Carl declares,

> An A is superior work--far above the average. More work, thought, time, creativity went into it--more than a perfunctory acomplishment of the assignment.... I can readily see which student spent more time, gave more thought, followed all the requirements and then some. (Carl)

But as he continues his musings, Carl stops himself and mentions the time factor and the number of students he must serve.

> I suppose I am making an excuse. I am not very good at diagnosing what a student's learning problems are and their learning styles or what's happening in their personal life. (Carl)

Earl feels that grading "should reflect student perfromance on an individual basis completely", yet he bases grades on "the best essay written in class". To get an "A" in Earl's course, students must score within 10% of the top student in the class.

Taking Individual Differences Under Consideration When Grading

Only one teacher, Earl, stated that he did not make allowances for differences among students when grading. Since students at his school are tracked, Earl feels he will not have a wide range of

abilities within his classroom. Tim echoed the practice of the remaining teachers when he indicated that individual situations and circumstances do have an effect on his grading decisions. He will increase a grade if he feels it will enhance a student's self esteem, but he will also lower the grade if he feels the student is underachieving. To illustrate his practice he gave two examples. In one instance he gave a Native American girl a "good" grade because "She put a lot of work and positive energy into getting the best grade she could". Tim feels that whatever system of grading a teacher uses, "It must have integrity". In referring to the student just mentioned, he recounted:

> She felt she had earned it. If she had done nothing and I had just given her the grade, she would have detected the dishonesty and the imbalance. (Tim)

In another case, Tim said he had reduced an intelligent student's grade because "even though all work was done" it showed a "lack of effort". The remaining teachers all indicated they made similar adjustments in grading. Earl, however, remained the exception:

> To set separate standards is not philosophically in line with a heterogenous society. Since the school should prepare students to live in the culture and abide by its laws, to make exceptions is unfair and illogical. (Earl)

Teacher Perceptions of How Students Fail

All six teachers agreed that factors other than ability influence student grades. None of the teachers in the study felt that any of their students were incapable of passing their courses. To get an "F", "a kid has to do nothing" (Earl). All teachers indicated that attendance was a major problem in secondary schools, and all agreed it took a conscious effort to fail their class. Failure usually meant students were not in class and/or did not complete assigned work. Those who taught English felt that reading ability was a major factor in student failure. Lisa reflected, "I wish we had a reading specialist. English teachers are not trained to teach reading.". She and another teacher have just begun a basic English course for freshmen. They found a large group of students whose needs were not being met by the current curricular offerings and created one with a smaller number of students that will go slower.

Grading decisions such as those discussed are based on the assumption that teachers hold an accurate view of student ability and effort. Ella differed markedly from the rest in this area. She illustrated her dissent with a story. One day in class she asked students to decide who among them worked the hardest at the coursework. Almost unanimously they indicted a female student for whom English was a second language. Upon discussion of their individual study practices, the students decided that they had come to that conclusion erroneously. It seemed one of the male students had a learning disability that forced him to put in an extraordinary number of hours in preparation just to remain current in class. This news was a revelation to students and Ella alike. She recounted this story to illustrate how often teachers make decisions automatically without considering alternative causation or resolution. Her conviction causes her to place the responsibility for summative evaluation with the students themselves.

Reflection:

The teachers in this study bear witness to the complexity and diversity of multiple internal and external forces at work in teaching/learning environments. Their struggles remind me of the "dilemma language" created by Ann and Harold Berlak (1981) to describe alternative resolutions in educational settings. The Berlaks portray a chaotic milieu of interacting variables which they broadly categorized as: control dilemmas, curriculum dilemmas, and societal dilemmas. How teachers resolve issues of grading and evaluation depends upon their individual experiences, the contexts in which they find themselves, and their personal values.

Respondents in this study were able to articulate some of the contextual and experiential causation for their grading and evaluation decisions, but the area of values was less in evidence in their reflections. According to the Berlaks, in order to transcend habituated patterns of response and entertain the possibility of other resolutions to grading and evaluation dilemmas, teachers must become "self-conscious", developing the ability to perceive one's actions and inclinations from other's perspectives as well as one's own (114). To enhance the possibility of teacher reflection, our continuing research will involve dialogues among respondents, inclusion of student perspectives, and an examination of the historical context in which teacher professional knowledge was

developed. The purpose of continuing this study is to create a space in which reflection and subsequent change can develop.

> (A) teacher is viewed as an individual who, although he/she may resolve the dilemma passively, mindlessly, and habitually, is also capable of reflecting on and evaluating the alternatives and sometimes does so. (Berlak: 132)

Historical Threads: A Select History of Pedagogical Philosophies

Mimetic Traditions: The Dominant Teaching Model

During the time the six teachers featured in this study were being socialized into teacher culture, a great debate was evolving concerning the purpose of education. Philip Jackson summarized the maelstrom of controversy within educational policies and practices of the 60s and 70s by noting that conflict arose between progressive educators who favored child-centered education and traditional educators who tended to be subject-centered. He labeled the first group "transformative" and the second "mimetic". Jackson went on to suggest that these apparently dichtomous orientations were not opposites, but related, and that "there is a perspective from which the two outlooks appear complementary and interdependent" (1986: 116).

To explain the mimetic tradition, Jackson drew on Aristotle, explaining that "secondhand" knowledge is "'presented' to the learner, rather than 'discovered' by him or her" (117). Several characteristics of such knowledge are important to understanding the distinction between mimetic and transformative practices. Mimetic knowledge has the ability of being "possessed". It can be "detached" and therefore "shown", a "condition that partially accounts for our occasional reference to it as 'objective' knowledge" which can be judged according to its accuracy. "Not only do judgments of this sort yield a measure of the success of teaching within this tradition, they also are the chief criterion by which learning is measured" (118). Mimetic traditions are based on the assumption that there are knowable truths that can be taught, and that their acquisition can be monitored and measured by evaluation. The procedure for transmitting such knowledge consists of a "cybernetic" model Jackson describes as a series of five steps: (1) test; (2) present;

(3)perform/evaluate; (4) [a] if the performance is correct, reward or fix; 4) [b] if the performance is incorrect, enter remedial loop; (5) advance (119-120). This systems model of education tends to be positivitic since it assumes absolute truths are knowable and measurable.

According to Jackson, the transformative outlook expects "qualitative change often of dramatic proportion, a metamorphosis, so to speak" in the person being taught. He notes the inherent morality of this undertaking and describes it as being perceived as "more exalted or noble than the more mimetic teaching" perhaps because transformations sought are "typically conceived of as being more deeply integrated and ingrained within the psychological makeup of the student" (120-1). He describes Socrates and Christ as transformative teachers, but decides "there *are* no formulas for accomplishing these most impressive if not miraculous feats of pedagogical skill". He does however attempt to describe characteristic ways such teachers have of working: personal modeling, "soft" suasion, and the use of narrative (123-4). Jackson's description implies that transformative teachers have particular goals in mind, but that those goals are more nebulous because they tend to allow for differences among students.

By citing Seymour Sarason, Jackson goes on to note that "there is no doubt that the school is responsive to external conditions in any number of ways, from the content of the curriculum to the design of school architecture" (133). Jackson then posits a "linkage between the mimetic tradition and the emergence of a scientific/technological world view" that began with the Sophists of ancient Greece. He characterizes their mindset as one still in evidence today. It smothers those who would follow the arduous Socratic path of "persistent inquiry through conversations with fellow seekers after the truth" (135). He traces this trend through the Enlightenment and into the modern world.

Jackson Deconstructed

Jackson assumed that teachers of both persuasions harbor goals for students and think of themselves as more knowledgable than their charges, but he claims that the distinctions between the two modes do not represent reality because all teaching incorporates some of each tradition. He believed that teaching in either tradition had the potential of being transformative. Most significantly, Jackson found that, although the potential is there, a gradual ascendence of

the mimetic tradition has occurred, and with it an educational philosophy that has turned away from transformative possibilities and emphasizes "notions like mastery, basic skills, competency, accountability", and a "scientific spirit" that valorizes "greater precision, objectivity, and reliability in the conduct of educational affairs" (132)--practices he and other educators are coming to question because of their apparent positivistic underpinnings.

Since Jackson's description of transformative teaching harbors the assumption of truths for the locating, it displays positivistic underpinnings itself. While that dichotomy is never addressed in the Jackson treatise, herein noting its existence illustrates not only how blind we can be to our own inconsistancies, it illustrates how difficult it is to overcome traditional practices and philosophies.

Beyond Mimesis: The Birth of Maieutic Pedagogy

In 1973 progressive educators, James B. Macdonald, Bernice J. Wolfson, and Esther Zaret co-authored an ASCD publication entitled: Reschooling Society: A Conceptual Model. It examined the kinds of environments, relationships, concepts of content and curricula, evaluations, and settings for learning that a struggle for humane educational change would require. The trio found that alterations in one aspect necessitated adjustment in others. They began their monograph with conviction and passion:

> The purpose of this monograph is to present an alternative to the dominant model of schooling, a model we reject as oppressive to human beings, both students and teachers. The emphases of the present system--on production of narrow predetermined ends, on efficiency as a primary value criterion, and on objectives predetermined by curriculum experts, written guides, and/or teachers--all combine into a design which is totally unsatisfactory. We favor a model which emphasizes values and processes that are consistent with a commitment to an explicit humanistic ethical concept. This commitment is in irreconcilable opposition to the current technical-production focus in schooling. (Macdonald, et al 1973: 1)

The authors go on to recount their efforts to use the prevailing model for thinking about schooling--Ralph Tyler's (1950) rationale, a highly

technical procedure of questioning, "which, when carried to its logical conclusion, provides a preplanned program of behavioral objectives closely tied to subsequent evaluation" (Macdonald et al: 2). (1) They had hoped to use Tyler's framework of questions about schooling in order to maintain historical continuity, but found the model impossible to use with their value base.

> In rejecting the implicit value position of the behavioral objectives approach (technical control) and explicating instead a humanistic-liberating stance, we found we had to deal with a different level of concern.(Macdonald et al: 2)

By declaring education to be a "moral enterprise", Macdonald, Wolfson, and Zaret acknowledged that "it is not only *not* value free, it is (along with politics) the most value laden of human activities". The value directives they devised--liberation, participation, and acceptance of cultural pluralism--were "basic thrusts common to all groups struggling to emerge as equal sharers in human society". For these progressive educators, the effort had to be socially useful and consistent with their values. Philip Jackson would certainly have identified these educators with transformative teaching, but the philosophy of education they espoused goes beyond his description to one I describe as maieutic--resembling the Socratic method of eliciting new ideas from another (from the Greek maieutikos meaning "of midwifery").

The model of learning they developed in light of those values included exploring, integrating, and transcending--dynamic, interactive processes that required a supportive, nurturant environment. They believed that traditional schools ignored the exploring and transcending (creating personal meaning) facets and exploited the integrating phase by treating tenative knowing as an end product, forever subjecting it to testing, measuring, evaluating, assessing, researching, and the like. This pressure for premature structuring, they felt, short-circuits the entire learning process, which could be further impaired if the student *felt* threatened in

(1). Tyler's model continues to be applied in educational settings. There is, however, a growing body of criticism directed at the Tyler model which some view as a reductionist (Schubert 1986, Giroux 1981). Others contend Tyler was misunderstood, and misapplied, perhaps because his model appeared logical, linear and objective (Connelly & Clandinin 1988: 147).

the learning situation." (Macdonald et al, 13). Obviously, this progressive pedagogical model places great importance on individual students and teachers as primary stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum. Such a focus was not predominant in traditional educational settings of that era. Evaluation was considered separate from curriculum planning. It was an end measure for matters of promotion and achievement, and rights to its use were preserved for teachers and standardized tests.

Mimetic Teaching/Learning Environments Remain the Norm

Research on progressive educational practices of the 1960s and 70s as they were experienced by students and teachers is limited. The task is made doubly difficult by the tendency of the educational establishment to study mimetic teaching situations in which educational outcomes are observable and measurable, and the tendency of educational researchers to develop normative, generalizable, or replicable studies rather than descriptive ones. Even when remarkable evidence of the success of student-centered pedagogy and alternative educational practices is presented, it often falls on unwilling ears. Wayne Jennings and Joe Nathan (1977) summarized research dating back to the Eight-Year Study (Aiken 1942) that argued the advantages of programs embodying Deweyan concepts over traditional programs. Philip Jackson, David Cohen, et al (1988) also argue that research to support educational change has been largely ignored by the educational establishment.

In concepts reminiscent of progressive educators from the 60s and 70s, Cohen recommends a teaching/learning environment that creates or encourages dissonance within the educative process. He says that learning to discover or understand a subject often entails getting students to hold several different, sometimes seemingly divergent views of a topic in mind at once. Such "adventurous" teaching is risky because such pedagogy not only "invites students to share their ideas, arguments, intuitions, and mistakes with classmates and teachers," it invites teachers to share their historically powerful role as controller in the classroom and model risk-taking, uncertaining, and the use of mistakes as learning indicators themselves (1988:73). In a similar vein, Donald Oliver (1990) makes a distinction between techinical knowing, the "knowledge-as-separate object", and grounded knowing, the "knowledge-as-intimate relationship" view. His observations have profound implications for curriculum, instruction, and evaluation.

Reciprocity and the creative process is inherent in the teaching/learning situation Macdonald, Wolfson, & Zaret described. Their model included exploring, integrating, and transcending--dynamic, interactive processes that required a supportive, nurturant environment. They believed that traditional schools ignored the exploring and transcending (creating personal meaning) facets and exploited the integrating phase by treating tenative knowing as an end product, forever subjecting it to testing, measuring, evaluating, assessing, and researching.

Mary Belenky et al (1986) refers to such interactive tutelage as connected teaching--connected teachers are believers. They trust their students thinking and encourage them to expand it. There is a sense of equality in her description, too. Like a midwife, such teachers assist students in giving birth to their ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it. These maieutic teachers help students deliver their words to the world, and they use their own knowledge to put the students into conversation with other voices--past and present--in the culture (219). Belenky et al find that women seem more aware of the ephemeral nature of truth. Questions and their answers vary throughout history, across cultures, from discussion to discussion, and from individual to individual.

These descriptions of evaluation processes generate a vision of transformative, student-centered education replete with collaborative, interactive processes rather than heirarchical power relationships. In such a setting internal and interpersonal conflict would be viewed as signs of learning and imminent transcendence of apparent dichotomies. None of these curricular designs would lend themselves to traditional evaluation methods. How could a teacher evaluate student progress in such a personal transformative process? Should she/he? Who are the most appropriate judges of growth or progress in such processes?

There were many interrelated innovations in curriculum, methods, and structure from the experimental era of the 60s and 70s, but I focus here on the changing attitudes about evaluation processes because it is in rejecting the judgment implied by grading that the power relationships within schools were most directly addressed. Educators in the open school movement rejected imposed positivistic goals and methods of evaluation that created a competitive relationship among students and a asymmetrical power relationship between students and teacher/evaluator. Such methods did not suit their underlying assumptions, did not answer the questions teachers and researchers were asking, did not facilitate learning processes, and, therefore, did not have a place in student-

centered schooling. Their intutitive responses to the inequity of such categorization, classification , and subordination processes were eventually vindicated. Since the 60s, research has gradually discovered the racism, sexism, and classism embedded in standardized, norm-based evaluation methods, as well as many accepted educational practices and structures

Traditional faith in normative evaluation is based on a scientific model of education that has realized growing resistance in educational circles. But the very idea of education implies change or growth, and some method of measuring that progress seemed necessary, therefore, progressive educators designed evaluation measures that met their unique needs. Since the purpose in progressive education in the 60s and 70s was to make learning responsive to individual student needs, evaluation that took place within most experimental schooling curriculum situations of that era focused on participants or stakeholders interpretations as a means of adapting curriculum and methodology to suit the immediate needs of those involved in the educational process. Student development was at the goal at the core of this process.

Traditional Evaluation Measures are Problematic

A growing body of evidence presented by social and educational research over the last several decades has generated enough evidence to surround mimetic curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices with an aura of suspicion. The use of standardized tests is under close scrutiny by many educational factions, especially those involved with issues of race, class, and gender (Cazden & John 1969, Green & Giffore 1980, Edson 1989, Ornstein & Levine 1989, Paris et al 1991, Victor 1991). Studies done in various social sciences, anthropology in particular, provide evidence of institutionalized racism in educational practices which continue the marginalization of those considered by the dominant social order to be somehow different (Dickeman 1971; Wax & Wax 1971, Scribner & Cole 1973, Wolcott 1974, McDermott 1974, Willis 1977, Ogbu 1978, Mc Dermott & Gospodinoff 1981, Koegel 1986, Edson 1989).

Currently, alternative assessment measures (Barone 1991, Eisner 1991, Krechevsky 1991, Paulson et al 1991, Sing & Buchanan 1991), and authentic achievement and evaluation are frequent themes in leading educational journals (Newmann 1991, Kirst 1991).

The validity of self-assessment and stakeholder based evaluation is growing with the number of research projects that analyze these phenomena (Connelly & Clandinin 1988, Falchikov & Boud 1989, Long 1989, Henry et al 1991, Paulson 1991).

Along with the increasing examination of alternative evaluation techniques and practices for all students, a discussion of the historical development of educational evaluation in this country reveals a tainted past. According to historian, C. H. Edson (1988), racism is embedded in the history of intelligence testing. The threat of racial contamination from black and immigrant populations was a recurring topic of discussion among influential educationists in the early 1900s. Edson also finds similarities between those early concerns and current demands for educational "Excellence" that advocate a common curriculum--a curriculum which often reveals itself as having been designed for the "white", privileged, and powerful (1989: 8). He goes on to develop a sound argument which portrays Western liberal tradition equating "Talent" with Virtue", a value I believe is implied in the ranking function of traditional grading practices.

Even teachers practicing connected teaching, or those who encourage other ways of knowing, or those who seek to legitimize grounded knowing are still hobbled by antiquated evaluation strategies which are more suitable for scientistic models of education. Evaluation and its function in the teaching/learning process present a particular problem to student-centered conceptions of teaching and learning. Maieutic pedagogy implies a midwifery approach which seems the antithesis of traditional education replete with the judgment ensconced in varying forms of assessment, evaluation and grading. According to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, it is not

> (E)valuation per se that subverts the aims of instruction but evaluation in the separate (impersonal, objective) mode. Evaluation in the connected mode requires that the standards of evaluation be constructed in collaboration with the students. Where impersonal standards are used, the students are turned into objects and the connection between teacher and student is broken. (1986: 208)

If you will recall, the teachers in this study felt that formative evaluation, a collaborative, recursive, organic interchange bewteen student and teacher, was integral to learning. Too many students

and too little time kept them from providing their students with that feedback. Summative grading was part of their evaluation model only because the educational system demanded such ranking.

We know that humans have the ability to learn and change on the basis of that knowledge; constructed reality can be reconstructed (Berger and Luckman 1966). Learning implies change in thinking and/or behavior. But who is best situated to observe and evaluate that change? Is evaluation of that change even appropriate? In critical, transformative, maieutic teaching, the teacher must rely on her/his intimate knowing of the student in order to validate, with any sense of comfort (certainty is passe') her perception of student progress. Is such judgment even appropriate?

Can we then create evaluation models that serve the purposes of student without compromising teacher integrity? All six of the teachers in this ongoing study found value in formative evaluation measures, and all of them indicated their discomfort with summative evaluation and the ranking function of traditional grading practices. Evaluation models designed in collaboration with students and based on reciprocal power and dialogue might be our next step in the process of transforming evaluation in education.

As Macdonald, Wolfson, and Zaret discovered twenty years ago, when educators consciously consider the complexities of intentional education based on declared beliefs curriculum, methodology, and evaluation form themselves concurrently. Therefore, it is impossible to extricate any one aspect of the teaching/learning situation for examination. I have attempted to focus herein on evaluation mainly because deconstruction in this area lags behind the work of curriculum theorist/practitioners.

Those of us teaching still seem embarrassed by the topic of grading, although we are obliged to maintain the practice by many of the institutions in which we work. Our resistance has been relatively covert. We inflate grades, make individual contracts with student, or devise other methods of subverting the process, but it is time to make explicit the dissonance created and our varied modes of handling our discomfort. If we are indeed to bring theory and practice together, educators must begin to openly discuss what it means to grade, and the practices we employ. Our observations will help reveal and possibly resolve the tensions between the demands of existing educational structures and processes and our personal philosophies of education.

In this small study, a few teachers have begun the process of examining those issues. As our collaborative research continues, awareness of the historical context of traditional evaluation and

assessment practices coupled with current research into the realm of teacher socialization (Schram 1991, O'Loughlin 1991, Britzman 1991), and discussion surrounding the influence of personal belief systems on teaching behaviors will inform our dialogue. We will take up our research in the fall, beginning with a discussion this paper and individual decisions. Who among us will choose to continue our inquiry: How are grading and evaluation processes within our classrooms experienced by students?

> Evaluation is the highest level of the learning taxonomy. When teachers reserve to themselves total control of evaluation processes they deny students an important learning opportunity. (Ella)

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APPENDIX 1

Evaluation & Grading Survey

[In the original survey, more space was left for responses.]

1. In what capacity do you teach?
   a. Do you teach at particular grade levels or with certain populations?

   b. Do you teach in definable subjects areas? If so, please list them.

2. For demographic purposes, would you please tell me your age and gender?

3. What is your personal philosophy concerning evaluation and grading?

4. In your current teaching situation, describe the process you use to evaluate and grade students.

5. How compatible did you feel your personal evaluation and grading practices were with the institutional policies you have encountered?

   a. If they were not compatible, how did that affect your practices?

6. Do you, as a teacher, ever modify either institutional or personal evaluation and/or grading policies?

   a. If so, what were some reasons you made such adjustments?

   b. If you have made such adjustments, would you, please, describe the situation(s)?

7. Do you take student differences into account when evaluating and grading?

   a. If so, what are some differences for which you have made adjustments?

   b. If you have made such adjustments, would you, please, describe the situation(s)?

8. Research suggests that gender, class, and/or race may affect student learning. Looking back over your years of teaching experience, would you tend to support or refute this proposition?

a. If your experiences support the proposition, have you made allowances for such differences in your evaluation and grading practices?

b. If you have made allowance, would you, please, describe the situation(s)?